**Name: Period:  
The least popular aren't the only targets in school bullying, study says**

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela

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Jonah Mowry made his now viral YouTube video for his small group of friends. He made the private video public in an effort to communicate to school bullies that he was finished being their victim.

LOS ANGELES—Only the king and queen of the prom are safe from bullying.

Researchers say that the more popular teens are, the more likely they are to be [bullied](https://www.newsela.com/?tag=bullying). Nearly a fifth of teens are bullied, and only those at the very top of the high school social ladder avoid it. This may come as a surprise to people who thought that the least popular kids, or outcasts, were the only targets.

Researchers Robert Faris of the University of California at Davis and Diane Felmlee of Penn State University write that traditional views of bullying tell less than the whole story. For most students, becoming more popular "increases the likelihood of victimization,” they wrote in the magazine of the American Sociological Association. As kids move up the social ladder, the victimization also becomes more severe.

The aggressors, too, often “possess strong social skills.” They bully others to move up the social ladder rather than to “re-enact their own troubled home lives.”

**Up And Down The Ladder**

The uppermost teens on the social scale can “afford” to be nice. Yet, those in the next level down have to keep themselves there, Faris said Tuesday.

He and Felmlee looked at how popularity can increase the chances of being a victim. They also explored the emotional fallout from being of victim of bullying, which can include feelings of sadness, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

They found that the ways in which popularity "can increase risk have been largely ignored and we identify a new pattern of victimization.” And it can work, they said. “Evidence suggests that aggressors’ campaigns of harassment and abuse are rewarded with increased prestige … particularly when they target socially prominent rivals.”

Perhaps it shouldn’t be a surprise that popular kids get targeted: If the tormentor is aiming to become more popular, “targeting prominent rivals makes strategic sense,” the researchers wrote. And for very popular victims, the fall can be more extreme.

To sort this out, the researchers used information from more than 8,000 students in 19 North Carolina schools. They asked them about their five closest friends, and five students who had “picked on or were mean” to them, and five they in turn had been mean to.

They used that web of connections to draw their conclusions.

**Girls Get Bullied More**

In the group, about half the students were white and a third black. Most lived with two parents. Girls had higher rates of victimization. The researchers noted that there could be differences in other populations.

Some students found protection; being friends with teens of the opposite gender provided some sort of shield.

The researchers don’t suggest that outcast teens of various sorts don’t get bullied — only that theirs is not the whole story.

Faris also said that there was a message in the research for teenagers and their parents: It’s probably better to have a few close friends than 200 Facebook friends. In addition, the “drama” that’s often discussed about teenage relationships might be taken more seriously — by students and parents, he said.

And many students, Faris said, don’t see what’s happening “as bullying and they may be sort of like fish in water and accustomed to having a lot of drama around them.”

**Please answer the questions in complete sentences.**

1. What do you predict this article will be about after **previewing** it?

2. What was the **main idea** of this article?

3. How does this article connect to The Outsiders? What similarities do these children have to the ones in the novel?

4. What is something surprising that you learned in the article that you may not have known before?

5. What is one question you still have about bullying?

(No, you may not say, “I don’t have any questions.”)